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Committee on Information
Twenty-fourth session
22 April-2 May 2002
Agenda item 9
Consideration and adoption of the report of the Committee to the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session

Draft report

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I. Introduction

1. At its thirty-fourth session, the General Assembly decided to maintain the Committee to Review United Nations Public Information Policies and Activities, established under Assembly resolution 33/115 C of 18 December 1978, which would be known as the Committee on Information, and to increase its membership from 41 to 66. In section I, paragraph 2, of its resolution 34/182 of 18 December 1979, the Assembly requested the Committee on Information:

> "(a) To continue to examine United Nations public information policies and activities, in the light of the evolution of international relations, particularly during the past two decades, and of the imperatives of the establishment of the new international economic order and of a new world information and communication order;
>
> "(b) To evaluate and follow up the efforts made and the progress achieved by the United Nations system in the field of information and communications;
>
> "(c) To promote the establishment of a new, more just and more effective world information and communication order intended to strengthen peace and international understanding and based on the free circulation and wider and better balanced dissemination of information and to make recommendations thereon to the General Assembly",

and requested the Committee on Information and the Secretary-General to report to the Assembly at its thirty-fifth session.

2. At its thirty-fifth session, the General Assembly, in its resolution 35/201 of 16 December 1980, expressed its satisfaction with the work of the Committee on Information, approved the report of the Committee and the recommendations of its Ad Hoc Working Group,[1] reaffirmed the mandate given to the Committee in Assembly resolution 34/182 and decided to increase the membership of the Committee from 66 to 67. The Committee on Information agreed, at its organizational session in 1980, that the principle of geographical rotation would be applied to all the officers of the Committee and that they should be elected for two-year terms of office.

3. At its thirty-sixth to fifty-first sessions (see resolutions 36/149 B, 37/94 B, 38/82 B, 39/98 A, 40/164 A, 41/68 A, 42/162 A and B, 43/60 A and B, 44/50, 45/76 A and B, 46/73 B, 47/73 B, 48/44 B, 49/38 B, 50/31 B and 51/138 B), the General Assembly again expressed its satisfaction with the work of the Committee on Information, approved the reports of the Committee[2] and its recommendations and reaffirmed the mandate given to the Committee in its resolution 34/182. At its fifty-second session, the Assembly took note of the report of the Committee[3] and adopted consensus resolutions 52/70 A and B of 10 December 1997. At its fifty-third session, the Assembly took note of the report of the Committee[4] and adopted consensus resolutions 53/59 A and B of 3 December 1998. At its fifty-fourth session, the Assembly took note of the report of the Committee[5] and adopted consensus resolutions 54/82 A and B of 6 December 1999. At its fifty-fifth session, the Assembly took note of the report of the Committee[6] and adopted consensus resolutions 55/136 A and B of 8 December 2000. At its fifty-sixth session, the

Assembly took note of the report of the Committee and adopted consensus resolutions 56/64 A of 10 December 2001 and B of 24 December 2001.

4. At its thirty-ninth session, the General Assembly appointed two new members of the Committee, namely China and Mexico; at its forty-first session, the Assembly appointed Malta as a new member of the Committee; at its forty-third session, the Assembly appointed Hungary, Ireland and Zimbabwe as new members of the Committee; and at its forty-fourth session, the Assembly appointed Nepal as a new member.

5. At its forty-fifth session, the General Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Committee on Information, to increase the membership of the Committee from 74 to 78, and appointed Czechoslovakia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Jamaica and Uruguay as members. The Assembly also decided to appoint the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic as a member of the Committee, with immediate effect, to fill the vacancy left by the German Democratic Republic.

6. At its forty-sixth session, the General Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Special Political Committee, to increase the membership of the Committee from 78 to 79, and appointed Burkina Faso as a member.

7. At its forty-seventh session, the General Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Special Political Committee, to increase the membership of the Committee on Information from 79 to 81, and appointed the Republic of Korea and Senegal as members.

8. At its forty-eighth session, the General Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), to increase the membership of the Committee on Information from 81 to 83, and appointed Gabon and Israel as members.

9. At its forty-ninth session, the General Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), to increase the membership of the Committee on Information from 83 to 88, and appointed Belize, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Kazakhstan and South Africa as members.

10. At its fiftieth session, the General Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), to increase the membership of the Committee on Information from 88 to 89, and appointed the Democratic People's Republic of Korea as a member.

11. At its fifty-second session, the General Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), to increase the membership of the Committee on Information from 89 to 90, and appointed Georgia as a member.

12. At its fifty-third session, the General Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), to increase the membership of the Committee on Information from 90 to 93, and appointed Angola, the Republic of Moldova and Solomon Islands as members.

13. At its fifty-fourth session, the General Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth

Committee), to increase the membership of the Committee on Information from 93 to 95, and appointed Liberia and Mozambique as members of the Committee.

14. At its fifty-fifth session, the General Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), to increase the membership of the Committee on Information from 95 to 97, and appointed Armenia and the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya as members of the Committee. Furthermore, the admission of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to membership in the United Nations, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 55/12 of 1 November 2000, terminated the membership of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in all organs and subsidiary organs of the United Nations, including the Committee on Information. At its fifty-sixth session, the General Assembly decided on the recommendation of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee to increase the membership of the Committee on Information from 96 to 98 and appointed Azerbaijan and Monaco as members.

15. The Committee is composed of the following Member States:

Algeria
Angola
Argentina
Armenia
Azerbaijan
Bangladesh
Belarus
Belgium
Belize
Benin
Brazil
Bulgaria
Burkina Faso
Burundi
Chile
China
Colombia
Congo
Costa Rica
Côte d'Ivoire
Croatia
Cuba
Cyprus
Czech Republic
Democratic People's Republic of Korea
Democratic Republic of the Congo
Denmark
Ecuador
Egypt
El Salvador
Ethiopia
Finland
France
Gabon
Georgia
Germany
Ghana
Greece
Guatemala
Guinea
Guyana
Hungary
India
Indonesia
Iran (Islamic Republic of)
Ireland
Israel
Italy
Jamaica
Japan
Jordan
Kazakhstan
Kenya
Lebanon
Liberia
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya
Malta
Mexico
Monaco
Mongolia
Morocco
Mozambique
Nepal
Netherlands
Niger
Nigeria
Pakistan
Peru
Philippines
Poland
Portugal
Republic of Korea
Republic of Moldova
Romania
Russian Federation
Senegal
Singapore
Slovakia
Solomon Islands
Somalia
South Africa
Spain
Sri Lanka
Sudan
Syrian Arab Republic
Togo
Trinidad and Tobago
Tunisia
Turkey
Ukraine
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
United Republic of Tanzania
United States of America
Uruguay
Venezuela
Viet Nam
Yemen
Zimbabwe

II. Organizational questions

A. Opening of the session

16. The organizational meeting of the twenty-fourth session of the Committee on Information was held on 22 April 2002 at United Nations Headquarters. The session was opened by the Chairman of the Committee, Mr. Milos Alcalay (Venezuela).

B. Officers

17. The officers of the Committee on Information for the period 2001-2002 are as follows:

Chairman:
Milos Alcalay (Venezuela)

Vice-Chairmen:
Ivan Matchavariani (Georgia)
Tserenpil Dorjsuren (Mongolia)
Peter Mollema (Netherlands)

Rapporteur:
Walid A. Haggag (Egypt)

C. Adoption of the agenda and programme of work

18. At its organizational meeting, the Committee adopted the following agenda and programme of work (A/AC.198/2002/1/Rev.1):

1. Opening of the session.
2. Adoption of the agenda and programme of work.
3. Statement by the Chairman.
4. Statement by the Interim Head, Department of Public Information.
5. General debate.
6. Consideration of reports submitted by the Secretary-General.
7. Open-ended working group of the Committee on Information.
8. Commemoration of World Press Freedom Day.
9. Consideration and adoption of the report of the Committee to the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session.

19. The Committee held the substantive meetings of its twenty-fourth session at United Nations Headquarters from 22 April to 2 May 2002.

20. For its consideration of agenda item 6, the Committee had before it the reports of the Secretary-General on:

(a) Reorientation of United Nations activities in the field of public information and communications (A/AC.198/2002/2);

(b) United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations (2001) (A/AC.198/2002/3);

(c) Integration of United Nations information centres with field offices of the United Nations Development Programme: continued implementation of the views of host Governments (A/AC.198/2002/4);

(d) Substantive questions: role of the Department of Public Information in United Nations peacekeeping (A/AC.198/2002/5);

(e) Continued development, maintenance and enrichment of the United Nations web site in the six official languages (A/AC.198/2002/6);

(f) Activities of the Joint United Nations Information Committee in 2001 (A/AC.198/2002/7).

D. Observers

21. The following Member States took part in the session as observers: Antigua and Barbuda, Austria, Central African Republic, Estonia, Iraq, Saint Lucia, Saudi Arabia, Sweden and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The Holy See also participated as an observer.

22. Representatives of the following specialized agencies also participated as observers: the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the World Intellectual Property Organization. The World Association of Former United Nations Interns and Fellows, Inc. and the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie also participated as observers.

E. Commemoration of World Press Freedom Day

23. On 2 May, the Committee observed World Press Freedom Day 2002 with an event on media and international terrorism, organized by the Department of Public Information. The Deputy Secretary-General opened the meeting, which was also addressed by the Chairman of the Committee on Information, the Director, Bureau of Public Information, UNESCO, and the Chairman of the World Press Freedom Committee. A number of distinguished print and broadcast journalists took part in a panel discussion on the theme "Covering the War on Global Terror", which also featured a videotaped interview with Mrs. Mariane Pearl, widow of *Wall Street Journal* reporter, Daniel Pearl. Free press issues that had arisen or taken on special significance in the aftermath of recent terrorist activities, such as national and international security vs. freedom of the press, televised coverage of terrorism trials, and safety of journalists were addressed. The event was moderated by the Interim Head of the Department of Public Information.

Notes

[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/35/21), annex, sect. V.

[2] Ibid., *Thirty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/36/21); ibid., Thirty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 21* and corrigendum (A/37/21 and Corr.1); ibid., *Thirty-eighth Session,*

Supplement No. 21 and corrigenda (A/38/21 and Corr.1 and 2); ibid., *Thirty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/39/21); ibid., *Fortieth Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/40/21); ibid., *Forty-first Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/41/21); ibid., *Forty-second Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/42/21); ibid., *Forty-third Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/43/21); ibid., *Forty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/44/21); ibid., *Forty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/45/21); ibid., *Forty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/46/21); ibid., *Forty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/47/21); ibid., *Forty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/48/21); ibid., *Forty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/49/21); ibid., *Fiftieth Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/50/21); and ibid., *Fifty-first Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/51/21).

[3] Ibid., *Fifty-second Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/52/21/Rev.1).

[4] Ibid., *Fifty-third Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/53/21/Rev.1).

[5] Ibid., *Fifty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 21* and addendum (A/54/21/Rev.1).

[6] Ibid., *Fifty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/55/21).

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Draft report

Chapter III
General debate

1. Statements in the general debate were made by the following States members of the Committee on Information: Algeria, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belarus, Benin, China, Costa Rica (on behalf of the Rio Group), Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Egypt, Ghana, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Jamaica (on behalf of the Caribbean Community), Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Mexico, Monaco, Morocco, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Senegal, Spain (on behalf of the European Union), Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, Ukraine, United Republic of Tanzania, United States of America, Venezuela (on behalf of the Group of 77) and Yemen.

2. In taking up the substantive questions before the Committee, many speakers said that they attached great importance to the commemoration of World Press Freedom Day, which this year would be observed on 2 May. One delegation, speaking on behalf of a large group, spoke of the freedom of expression as a universal right that "knows no borders" and stressed that an independent media was crucial in building democracy. His group condemned acts of violence "to silence journalists", or to suppress and distort information, and mourned the journalists who had given their lives in the line of duty. These views were shared by a number of other delegations.

3. All speakers in the general debate pointed to the critical role of information in development and the achievement of social justice. A number spoke of the bitter contradiction inherent in the fact that astounding advances in information and communication technologies were serving to deepen the digital divide between the developed and the developing countries. One delegation said that, unfortunately, the real concern for a vast majority of the world's peoples was not the latest software but, rather, the bread to live. Many Committee members emphasized the continuing

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importance of the establishment of a new world information and communications order which was based on the free and balanced flow of information. One delegation said that some countries used the mass media to distort the reality of developing countries.

4. In the view of many speakers, the United Nations as a whole, and the Department of Public Information in particular, had an essential role to play in seeking to bridge that digital divide. They spoke of the urgent need to harness information technology for the equal benefit of all people everywhere, in keeping with the goals of the Millennium Declaration. Many agreed that the technology was especially important for the African continent. One speaker said that it was essential that the focus be on "needy customers", which were the developing countries. One delegation, speaking on behalf of a large group, said that the United Nations had indeed begun to address the role of information and communications technology in development and to examine how to make all countries part of that "irreversible process". That speaker, and another delegation on behalf of a group, pointed to the importance of the upcoming World Summit on the Information Society. In this connection, one speaker in particular praised the Secretary-General for the establishment of the United Nations Information Technology Service, the Health InterNetwork and the Information and Communications Technology Task Force.

5. All delegations strongly supported the Secretary-General's commitment to enhanced communications as a key element in the reform and revitalization of the United Nations in a new information age, and to developing a culture of communications within the Organization. In this connection, one delegation said that it was unfortunate that cuts in the programme budget for upgrading equipment in 2002-2003 would affect the ability of the United Nations to carry out its information dissemination activities, and that, accordingly, adequate resources should be provided to the Department of Public Information to implement its current and future programmes.

6. All speakers agreed that the Department of Public Information was the "voice" of the United Nations, and that its principal goal was to raise the level of popular awareness of the Organization's aims and activities, and build broad-based support for its work. One delegation characterized the Department as "the umbilical cord" that tied the Organization to the outside world. The general view expressed by delegations was that a clear relationship should be established between the Secretary-General's road map for the millennium development goals and the programmes of the Department.

7. Many speakers were of the opinion that the Secretary-General's comprehensive review of the management and operations of the Department of Public Information, as called for by the General Assembly in resolution 56/253 of 24 December 2001, should aim at strengthening the role of the Department, and not diminishing it, and should focus on its relevant and mandated functions. One delegation emphasized the need for the Department to consult with the Member States in the review process, especially those that were the developing countries.

8. A number of delegations pointed to the important role of the Committee on Information in determining the information and communications policies for the Organization. In that connection, one delegation "regretted deeply" the divisiveness and "extremist positions" in other committees which aimed to circumvent the Committee. Another speaker said that it would be seeking the Committee's support

for adopting language reasserting the role of the Committee as the main subsidiary body mandated to make recommendations relating to the work of the Department.

9. A number of delegations cautioned that budgetary considerations alone should not determine the continuing provision of long-established activities and services to Member States. They were of the view that the Committee must first examine the Secretary-General's comprehensive review of the Department before a decision was taken in any other forum. One Committee member said that the review should not be considered from "the principal angle of financial considerations", since the political importance and beneficial results which derived from the Department's activities were factors to be considered above all others. One delegation said that reform must not become "a hostage to finance". One speaker maintained that some activities had "intangible benefits", for example the exhibits in the public lobby, and, for those, alternate sources of financing could be sought. In this regard, another pointed to the benefits of the travelling exhibits in particular.

10. All Committee members expressed strong support for the Interim Head of the Department of Public Information and for the work that he was carrying out to further strengthen the communications function within the Organization. Committee members recognized that the report of the Secretary-General on the reorientation of United Nations activities in the field of public information and communications (A/AC.198/2002/2) was the main focus of the debate, and acknowledged that it was a sound basis for deliberations. In principle, all delegations supported the strengthening of the Department and the broad directions being contemplated to improve its efficiency. One delegation, speaking on behalf of a large group, suggested that the Department could benefit from a reorganization of its activities to ensure the efficient utilization of limited resources. One speaker pledged his country's support for the Department's efforts to better position itself to more effectively carry out its mandates in an "ever-changing information environment", and also noted at the same time that mandates should be reviewed on a regular basis. Another suggested that "clear-headed proposals", such as the one pertaining to the Cartography Section, should be addressed. One delegation found the proposals to eliminate services "alienating". In the reorientation process, several speakers said that they supported increased coordination between the Department and other Secretariat departments, which would entail the need for a more "direct interface" structure. Similarly, several delegations stressed the need for the components of the Organization to speak with one voice, and in that connection they hailed the possibilities of the United Nations Communications Group for improving coordination within the system.

11. Many speakers noted that reform was a process, not an event, and that the reorientation of the Department should be characterized as a work in progress, since constant re-evaluation was necessary in any institution to meet changing needs. A number of delegations expressed their support for the Department's new focus on performance management, programme effectiveness and efficiency. They were supportive of the drive to reach out to specially targeted audiences, and to understand "customer needs" in the Department's information activities. While agreeing with the goal of creating a culture of evaluation within the Department, one speaker on behalf of a large group said that evaluations must not always be based on numbers alone, but on the overall impact of activities, especially in the developing world. Similarly, one delegation expressed the view that it was not always easy to quantify the Department's activities.

12. With regard to the proposed new "mission statement" for the Department, there were differing points of view. Several speakers supported it, while others were not convinced that it effectively captured the essence of General Assembly resolution 13 (I) of 1946. One speaker, however, strongly welcomed it. In terms of the suggested new name for the Department, two delegations expressed concern.

13. Several speakers underlined their support for the Department's working through intermediaries, such as the media, educational institutions and non-governmental organizations. One delegation focused on the importance of the Department's cooperation with non-governmental organizations, and said that they were a broad and democratic base of support within civil society for the principles and goals of the United Nations.

14. All speakers pointed to the enormous outreach possibilities opened up by the communications revolution and strongly supported the Department's embrace of new technology in all its aspects. They unanimously commended the Department for developing and enhancing the United Nations web site, which they saw as a major communications tool to extend the direct reach of the United Nations around the world. One delegation, in referring to the millions of daily "hits" on the site, characterized the progress as "remarkable". At the same time, one delegation questioned the need for DPI to employ an outside contractor to rationalize the web site, and believed that the rationalization and enhancement should be done through the Department's in-house expertise.

15. Many speakers were of the strong opinion that more must be done to improve the multilingual character of the United Nations web site and to achieve the goal of parity among all six official languages. As one speaker on behalf of a large group said, major efforts were needed to "preserve the plurality of languages" in information output. They appealed for equal treatment of all six official languages both on the Internet and in the Department's print products. One speaker said that efforts must be made in this regard "without distinction and without discrimination". Several speakers, including one on behalf of a large group, noted that the Spanish language was second to English in terms of accesses on the web site. It therefore followed that the Department must make special efforts to enhance the Spanish web site. The availability of Arabic language materials was a main concern for a number of speakers. Several speakers welcomed the achievement of the web pages in the Russian language.

16. Several delegations expressed the view that the Department should establish identical management structures for each of the language units, to enable them to develop in a more balanced way. One delegation agreed that this was necessary, including for the Chinese language. Another speaker was emphatic in asserting that one of the options which the Department was putting forward as a means towards achieving the goal of linguistic parity on the web site was unsatisfactory. While appreciating the problems involved, his delegation did not believe there was an alternative to translating all the information available on the web site in English into the other official languages. In his delegation's view, the full linguistic parity called for by the General Assembly could only be brought about by the necessary political will, and the provision of additional financial resources. On a positive note, one delegation said that the linkage of the Official Documents System with the freely accessible United Nations web site would significantly enhance the multilingual nature of the site, as well as lead to cost efficiencies. That speaker also stated that

his delegation would be proposing that the Secretary-General report to the Committee at its next session on the subject.

17. One delegation was emphatic that information sources must be reliable, and, in that context, pointed to an error on the web site relating to his country, which he said required further analysis. Another singled out for praise the Department's *CyberSchoolBus* project on the Internet, as well as the *UN Works* site. Several speakers supported the move towards creating one central Internet portal to encompass the web sites of the system.

18. Many speakers emphasized their continuing concern that the utilization of new technologies should not be at the cost of traditional means of communication, which were still the main source of information in most developing countries. In this connection, a number of delegations pointed to the importance of radio, especially in Africa, as a cost-effective and far-reaching means of outreach and, in this context, expressed their strong support for the live radio project. Several delegations said that the project should be put on a stable footing. Another speaker noted that the Department's outreach through a broadcasting arrangement in his country was reaching a record number of listeners in Africa. One delegation suggested that the time of the live broadcast in Asia be rescheduled for the convenience of that large audience. One speaker emphasized the need for a systematic evaluation of the international radio broadcasting project, especially since the General Assembly had approved it for an initial two-year period, and looked forward to the provision of detailed listenership surveys, which would help inform both the Department's and the Committee's evaluation.

19. Another speaker expressed appreciation for the taped radio programmes in Bahasa Indonesian. One delegation, speaking on behalf of a group, said that its members were pleased with the programming provided by the Caribbean Radio Unit, and at the same time called for the reinstatement of the Caribbean Magazine programme. That speaker also called again upon the Department to introduce radio programming in Creole for the Haitian public.

20. Another speaker, on behalf of a large group, said that it was important for the Department's radio and television output to take advantage of new platforms and in that regard proposed that the Secretary-General consider launching a feasibility study for a global television satellite network. One delegation denounced the aggression that it was facing from the radio and television programming of another Member State, on a daily basis on many frequencies. It was an "electronic war", which was in violation of its national sovereignty and international law.

21. A number of countries said that their delegations attached great importance to the daily press releases, issued by the Department in English and French, as they were essential to the work of those countries with small missions, whose staff were unable to attend all the daily meetings. One speaker said that they were particularly valuable to "those of us from Africa with limited resources". Several speakers also pointed to the Department's new e-mail NewsAlert, which was proving very useful to the media in their countries. A number of speakers said that their countries attached great importance to the Department's training programme for broadcasters and journalists, with one delegation noting "with surprise" the cutbacks in this programme, which would be detrimental to developing countries.

22. The Department's flagship publications, namely the *Yearbook of the United Nations* and the *United Nations Chronicle*, were of special interest to several delegations. They were in agreement that the former was of a high quality and useful as the only authoritative reference work on the Organization. There were, however, differing opinions on the latter. One speaker characterized the *Chronicle* as "stimulating and thought-provoking", while another considered that its production needed to be justified in relation to its readership and impact, and that resources might be reprogrammed elsewhere in the Department.

23. Several speakers hailed the Dag Hammarskjöld Library as the institutional memory of the Organization, and "a virtual library with world outreach", and one commended it on the attainment of its fortieth anniversary. The latter delegation, speaking on behalf of a group, praised the level of the support offered by the Library and said that the training programmes were of "immense benefit" to permanent missions at Headquarters, as well as to depository librarians in developing countries. One speaker was pleased to note that a reprioritizing of functions in the Dag Hammarskjöld Library was being contemplated, and was of the view that its technical services functions should be automated and rationalized, thereby freeing its "considerable professional expertise" to priority Secretariat-wide information support activities.

24. Many speakers pointed to the call by the General Assembly to maintain and improve activities in the areas of special interest to developing countries and those with special needs, including countries in transition. In this regard, they strongly supported the Department's alignment of its activities with the Millennium Declaration and with the major issues emphasized by the Secretary-General: poverty eradication, conflict prevention, sustainable development, the environment, human rights, the HIV/AIDS epidemic, the battle against international terrorism and the needs of the African continent. They supported the advocacy and outreach activities of the Department in a number of major areas of international concern. Several said that the information work on the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations (2001), which had helped to prioritize tolerance, had been noteworthy.

25. Delegations pointed to a number of the Department's successful advocacy activities, such as those for the recent International Conference on Financing for Development, held at Monterrey, Mexico, the Second World Assembly on Ageing, held at Madrid, and in support of the upcoming World Summit on Sustainable Development at Johannesburg. One delegation, speaking on behalf of a group, called on DPI to coordinate the commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of the signing of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

26. Many delegations supported the Department's important role in the global fight against terrorism, which in their view posed a very real and dangerous threat to humanity. Several, in particular, hailed the creation of the multilingual "UN action against terrorism" page on the web site, and another suggested the creation of a world forum on how civil society and media could combat terrorism. One delegation said that in the light of the events of 11 September 2001, it was vital that the United Nations work to inform the world's people on peace, development and human rights.

27. One speaker said that the Department must prioritize its work on the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, as people in the non-self-governing territories must be permitted to exercise their right of self-determination. Another delegation appreciated the observance of International Women's Day, which

it said had "international reverberations". One speaker called for information on the problems of the Semipalatinsk region. Several delegations expressed their appreciation to the Department for its work relating to the Chernobyl disaster and for providing objective information on its dimensions.

28. The turmoil in the Middle East and the sufferings of the Palestinian people were a major focus for a number of speakers and, in that connection, they called for the full implementation of all information activities endorsed by the General Assembly in the special information programme on the question of Palestine, until a just and lasting solution to the Palestinian question was achieved. They were of the view that those information activities on Palestine had clearly gained increased significance during the difficult times, which required enhanced efforts to shed light on the suffering of the Palestinian people subjected to occupation, their legitimate right to self-determination and the establishment of their independent state. One speaker expressed appreciation for the DPI training programme for Palestinian journalists.

29. A number of speakers, including one on behalf of a large group, were of the view that adequate information components were crucial to the success of peacekeeping missions, and should therefore be strengthened. One delegation noted approvingly that DPI had continued to provide planning and operational support to information components of peacekeeping operations and peace missions, such as those in Kosovo, Eritrea and Ethiopia, Sierra Leone, East Timor and Afghanistan. One delegation questioned the Department's request for additional resources from the support account for peacekeeping operations, and thought it should be delayed until consideration of the comprehensive review of the Department was completed.

30. Many speakers pointed to the importance they attached to the work of the information centres, which they saw as United Nations windows on the world, especially in developing countries. Several delegations also noted that the role of the centres in developing countries was particularly important, since, in the words of one speaker, "access to technology eludes the majority of the population". A number of speakers agreed that the integration of information centres with field offices of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) should be on a case-by-case basis, taking the views of host countries into account. Another delegation expressed its appreciation for the care displayed by the Secretariat in respecting the specific criteria and guidance approved by the General Assembly for the integration of these centres. One speaker supported the United Nations houses initiative, and said that there was "ample opportunity" for better coordination, cooperation and consolidation of United Nations system-wide field offices.

31. Regarding the information centres, a number of delegations referred to the reorientation report, and to specific comments contained in it. On the subject of establishing regional hubs, several members suggested that the idea be given more thought, one suggesting it was a bit "premature". However, another delegation endorsed this proposal in areas where "linguistic commonalities facilitate regionalization". Mindful of the high costs of rental and rent-related expenses in selected developed countries, many said they supported the further study of the allocation of staff and financial resources to the centres, which would be, as one delegation described it, "a cost-benefit analysis". Some delegations referred to the possibility of redirecting resources from information centres in those developed countries where the rental costs were exceptionally high to other priority areas,

including to centres in developing countries. One speaker firmly agreed with the suggestion that practical criteria should be established with regard to the location of information centres.

32. Concerning the work of specific centres, one representative said that the activities of UNIC Tokyo were highly appreciated, and that his Government intended to make voluntary contributions to it. Several noted that the work of UNIC Islamabad was impressive, as had been notably demonstrated at the Department's informal briefing for Committee members. One delegation, in supporting the work of centres as a bridge to Governments and non-governmental organizations, pointed to the activities of UNIC Mexico City. Another pointed to the achievements of UNIC Moscow, which included translating information materials into Russian. One delegation noted "with appreciation" the role played by UNIC New Delhi.

33. One speaker said that, rather than being strengthened, the "reverse trend" had been the reality in recent years, and that a large number of centres had been closed or merged with other offices, and otherwise weakened. UNIC Dhaka was a case in point. Another delegation, on behalf of a large group, called for the establishment of the enhanced information component in the UNDP multi-island office in Kingston, Jamaica, to complement the work of UNIC Port-of-Spain.

34. At the end of the general debate, the Interim Head of the Department made a statement, in which he responded to questions raised by delegations.

Chapter IV
Consideration of the reports of the Secretary-General

35. Five reports of the Secretary-General were introduced by programme managers of the Department and considered individually. The report of the Secretary-General on the reorientation of United Nations activities in the field of public information and communications (A/AC.198/2002/2) was considered in the opening remarks of the Interim Head and later in the general debate, and therefore did not receive a separate review.

36. Concerning the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations (2001) (A/AC.198/2002/3), the representative of the Department noted that, during the build-up for the Year, which culminated in the plenary meetings of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly (8 and 9 November 2001), it had mobilized all available resources to publicize the meetings and raise global awareness of the aims of the Year. The Department had conducted its activities in close cooperation with the Secretary-General's Personal Representative for the Year. To facilitate extensive public participation in the Year, the Department worked in close partnership with Member States and forged a broad coalition with non-governmental organizations, educational institutions and private sector bodies. The observance of the Year and the issuance of the publication of the Group of Eminent Persons, entitled "Crossing the Divide", had provided the Department of Public Information with a foundation on which to carry on the dialogue among various groups in society at all levels, from local and national to international. The United Nations continued to remain the true home of the dialogue among civilizations and, through the continuing promotion of dialogue in all parts of

the world, the Department hoped to contribute to the creation of lasting peace within and between civilizations.

37. One speaker said that the goals of the Year were to promote mutual understanding, tolerance and peaceful coexistence. The General Assembly had adopted the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations, to which all Member States attached great importance. He thanked the Department for the important contributions that it had made to publicize the Year, emphasizing that this would be a long-term campaign.

38. With regard to the report of the Secretary-General on the integration of United Nations information centres with field offices of UNDP (A/AC.198/2002/4), a representative of the Department said that it was continuing to implement the views of Member States hosting information centres integrated with the field offices of UNDP, in order to further strengthen the efficiency of public information activities. Currently there was no pending proposal to integrate any additional information centre. However, should any request be forthcoming, the Department would review it jointly with UNDP and the Government of the host country concerned, prior to submitting it to the Committee on Information for consideration.

39. Building on their 20-year working relationship, the Department and UNDP had continued to look for ways and means to improve the delivery of public information programmes and strengthen the unified image of the United Nations. They created a joint working group in September 2001 to review all aspects of cooperation in the area of public information at the field level. In addition, the Department noted that, owing to the personal efforts of the Administrator of UNDP, the United Nations resident coordinators had become increasingly attentive to the key role of information. The Department also emphasized that integration was on a case-by-case basis and was not intended to be a "one-size-fits-all" solution, and emphasized that the Secretary-General appreciated the continued support which United Nations information centres received from their host countries.

40. A representative of the Department said with reference to the integration exercise, that the General Assembly set out clear guidelines, which were contained in the annual resolution on questions relating to information, and which the Department followed carefully. In response to one delegation's specific question on paragraph 8 of the report, the representative of Department said that it should be possible to make available, as requested, the results of the review currently being conducted on the formal agreement of 1990 on cooperation between the Department and UNDP.

41. With regard to the report of the Secretary-General on the role of the Department of Public Information in United Nations peacekeeping (A/AC.198/2002/5), a representative of the Department said that, in implementation of the relevant provisions of General Assembly resolutions and working closely with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Department had continued to provide planning and operational support to information components of peacekeeping operations, to the extent possible. Enhancing this capacity, as supported by the Assembly, would enable the Department to contribute more effectively in these areas, as well as to efforts undertaken by mission information components to build and sustain public and governmental support for peacekeeping operations. The Department was doing its utmost, but could not do more until additional resources were forthcoming.

42. In highlighting paragraph 22 of the report, a representative of the Department said that, despite the General Assembly's endorsement of the information support functions of the Department of Public Information, the number of staff dedicated to public information in United Nations peacekeeping had remained at the same level. Several speakers noted that in that paragraph it was also stated that the report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly on requirements for funding under the support account for peacekeeping operations for the period from 1 July 2002 to 30 June 2003 would include a provision for additional resources for the Department of Public Information for "backstopping peacekeeping operations". One delegation asked if there was any more specific information available on this, and another asked if resources could be transferred from the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to the Department of Public Information. Another delegation commended the information support for the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone as an example of a good programme for peace-building.

43. A representative of the Department introduced the report of the Secretary-General on the continued development, maintenance and enrichment of the United Nations web site in the six official languages (A/AC.198/2002/6) and explained that it was the fifth in a series addressing this issue. There were two courses of action being suggested for consideration. Action 1 called for replicating all materials on the English web site in the other language sites. Action 2 would allow the web sites to develop independently in each language on the basis of the resource capacities of author departments and offices, and was being recommended for approval. The Department noted that replicating all materials would require substantial resources, although the situation would be much improved if the *United Nations Treaty Series* were to be exempted. It was clear, however, that the achievement of the goal of linguistic parity would be a long-range project. The representative of the Department noted, on a positive note, that the introduction of more automated methods of translation in the future could "dramatically" reduce translation costs, as the technology developed.

44. One delegation stated that, in its view, the proposed action 2 was a continuation of the status quo, and the disparity was increasing. In its view, action 1 was the only real solution, and it was hoped that the Committee would support it, although there could be room for some compromise. Several speakers pointed to the continuing need to implement paragraph 57 of General Assembly resolution 56/64 B, in which the Assembly called for an equitable distribution of financial and human resources within the Department allocated to the United Nations web site among all official languages on a continuous basis. The Department provided the clarification that, in terms of the structure of web site management in the Department, there was an equitable distribution of resources in web site management, while programming and design were common among the languages. However, resources for content creation were not equitably allocated in the budget. The web site was a "storefront" and, before full language parity could be achieved, the content had first to be created in other author areas.

45. A representative of the Department introduced the report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the Joint United Nations Information Committee in 2001 (A/AC.198/2002/7), and highlighted some of the key elements of the twenty-seventh session of the Committee, held at Geneva in July 2001 at the headquarters of the World Intellectual Property Organization. It was noted that, in October 2001, as part of its review, the Administrative Committee on Coordination, now renamed the

United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, decided to do away with its permanent subsidiary bodies. As a result, as from January 2002, inter-agency coordination would be carried out through a new informal and flexible mechanism, the United Nations Communications Group. The Department said that the Committee on Information would be kept fully apprised of inter-agency cooperation in the field of public information, although the reporting obligation, per se, no longer applied. It was expected that these new arrangements for inter-agency coordination in the field of communications would contribute to building a culture of communications within the United Nations system.

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Draft report

Chapter V
Preparation and adoption of the report of the Committee to the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session

Draft resolution A
Information in the service of humanity

The General Assembly,

Taking note of the comprehensive and important report of the Committee on Information,[1]

Also taking note of the report of the Secretary-General on questions relating to information,

Urges all countries, organizations of the United Nations system as a whole and all others concerned, reaffirming their commitment to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and to the principles of freedom of the press and freedom of information, as well as to those of the independence, pluralism and diversity of the media, deeply concerned by the disparities existing between developed and developing countries and the consequences of every kind arising from those disparities that affect the capability of the public, private or other media and individuals in developing countries to disseminate information and communicate their views and their cultural and ethical values through endogenous cultural production, as well as to ensure the diversity of sources and their free access to information, and recognizing the call in this context for what in the United Nations and at various international forums has been termed "a new world information and communication order, seen as an evolving and continuous process":

[1] To be issued as *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-seventh session, Supplement No. 21* (A/57/21).

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(a) To cooperate and interact with a view to reducing existing disparities in information flows at all levels by increasing assistance for the development of communication infrastructures and capabilities in developing countries, with due regard for their needs and the priorities attached to such areas by those countries, and in order to enable them and the public, private or other media in developing countries to develop their own information and communication policies freely and independently and increase the participation of media and individuals in the communication process, and to ensure a free flow of information at all levels;

(b) To ensure for journalists the free and effective performance of their professional tasks and condemn resolutely all attacks against them;

(c) To provide support for the continuation and strengthening of practical training programmes for broadcasters and journalists from public, private and other media in developing countries;

(d) To enhance regional efforts and cooperation among developing countries, as well as cooperation between developed and developing countries, to strengthen communication capacities and to improve the media infrastructure and communication technology in the developing countries, especially in the areas of training and dissemination of information;

(e) To aim at, in addition to bilateral cooperation, providing all possible support and assistance to the developing countries and their media, public, private or other, with due regard to their interests and needs in the field of information and to action already adopted within the United Nations system, including:

(i) The development of the human and technical resources that are indispensable for the improvement of information and communication systems in developing countries and support for the continuation and strengthening of practical training programmes, such as those already operating under both public and private auspices throughout the developing world;

(ii) The creation of conditions that will enable developing countries and their media, public, private or other, to have, by using their national and regional resources, the communication technology suited to their national needs, as well as the necessary programme material, especially for radio and television broadcasting;

(iii) Assistance in establishing and promoting telecommunication links at the subregional, regional and interregional levels, especially among developing countries;

(iv) The facilitation, as appropriate, of access by the developing countries to advanced communication technology available on the open market;

(f) To provide full support for the International Programme for the Development of Communication[2] of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, which should support both public and private media.

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[2] See United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *Records of the General Conference, Twenty-first Session, Belgrade, 23 September to 28 October 1980*, vol. 1, *Resolutions*, sect. III.4, resolution 4/21.

Draft resolution B
United Nations public information policies and activities

The General Assembly,

Reiterating its decision to consolidate the role of the Committee on Information as its main subsidiary body mandated to make recommendations to it relating to the work of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat,

Concurring with the view of the Secretary-General that the fundamental premise underlying the reorientation efforts of the Department of Public Information remains General Assembly resolution 13 (I) of 13 February 1946, establishing the Department of Public Information, which states in paragraph 2 of annex I to the resolution that "the activities of the Department of Public Information should be so organized and directed as to promote to the greatest possible extent an informed understanding of the work and purposes of the United Nations among the peoples of the world",

Concurring also with the view of the Secretary-General that the contents of public information and communications should be placed at the heart of the strategic management of the United Nations, and that a culture of communications should permeate all levels of the Organization, as a means of fully informing the peoples of the world of the aims and activities of the United Nations, in accordance with the principles and purposes enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, in order to create broad-based global support for the United Nations,

Stressing that the primary mission of the Department of Public Information is to provide, through its outreach activities, accurate, impartial, comprehensive and timely information to the public on the tasks and responsibilities of the United Nations in order to strengthen international support for the activities of the Organization with the greatest transparency,

Reaffirming that the Department of Public Information must prioritize its work programme while respecting existing mandates and in line with rule 5.6 of the Rules and Regulations Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring and Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation, to better focus its message and concentrate its efforts, and, as a function of performance management, to match its programmes with the needs of its target audiences, on the basis of improved feedback and evaluation mechanisms,

Stating that the comprehensive review of the work of the Department of Public Information, being prepared in accordance with General Assembly resolution 56/253 of 24 December 2001, and the embracing of a strategic direction which the Department has to consider as a result, provides an opportunity to take further steps to rationalize in order to maintain, eliminate, enhance or reduce its activities and outputs, to enhance its efficiency and effectiveness, to maximize the use of its resources and, finally, to establish a departmental structure to accomplish these goals,

Expressing its concern that the gap in the information and communication technologies between the developed and the developing countries has continued to widen and that vast segments of the population in developing countries are not benefiting from the present information and technology revolution and, in this regard, underlining the necessity of rectifying the imbalances of the global

information and technology revolution in order to make it more just, equitable and effective,

Recognizing that developments in the information and communication technology revolution open vast new opportunities for economic growth and social development and can play an important role in the eradication of poverty in developing countries and, at the same time, emphasizing that it also poses challenges and risks and could lead to the further widening of disparities between and within countries,

Stating that the present developments and rapid changes in the field of information and communication technology have a tremendous impact on the functioning of the United Nations and the Department of Public Information in particular, which may necessitate suitable adjustments in the manner in which the mandate of the Department is implemented, as a key element in the reform and revitalization of the United Nations in a new information age,

Recognizing that the mix of means used by the Department of Public Information to disseminate its message remains a key area for review and in this regard that the Department should rely on reaching the public through existing external media to a greater degree than at present,

Recalling its resolution 56/262 of 15 February 2002 on multilingualism, and emphasizing the importance of making appropriate use of the official languages in the activities of the Department of Public Information, aiming to eliminate the disparity between the use of English and the other five official languages,

Welcoming Azerbaijan and Monaco to membership in the Committee on Information,

I. Introduction

1. *Reaffirms* its resolution 13 (I) of 13 February 1946, in which it established the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat, and all other relevant General Assembly resolutions related to the activities of the Department;

2. *Calls upon* the Secretary-General, in respect of the public information policies and activities of the United Nations, to continue to implement fully the recommendations contained in paragraph 2 of its resolution 48/44 B of 10 December 1993 and other mandates as established by the General Assembly;

3. *Emphasizes* the importance of the medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005, as a guideline that sets out the overall orientation of the public information programme for the Organization's goals through effective communication;

4. *Welcomes* the efforts of the Secretary-General to conduct and submit a comprehensive review on the management and operations of the Department of Public Information to the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session, and encourages the Secretary-General to present wide-ranging innovative proposals for the Department that should take into account the issue raised in the current resolution;

5. *Requests* the Department of Public Information, following the priorities laid down by the General Assembly and using the United Nations Millennium

Declaration[3] as its guide, to pay particular attention to major issues: eradication of poverty, conflict prevention, sustainable development, human rights, the human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) epidemic, the battle against international terrorism and the needs of the African continent;

6. *Concurs* with the Secretary-General on the need to enhance the technological infrastructure of the Department of Public Information to widen its outreach as well as to improve the United Nations web site;

7. *Acknowledges* the important work carried out by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and its collaboration with news agencies and broadcasting organizations in developing countries in disseminating information on priority issues;

II. General activities of the Department of Public Information

8. *Takes note* of the efforts made by the Department of Public Information, in the context of the progress report of the Secretary-General on the reorientation of United Nations activities in the field of public information and communications[4] and the ongoing comprehensive review, to articulate to Member States the challenges it faces in improving its efficiency and productivity, and encourages him to continue the reorientation exercise including wide-ranging and possibly new innovative proposals, taking into account broad principles and directions contained in the present resolution and to report thereon to the Committee on Information at its twenty-fifth session;

9. *Reaffirms* that the Department of Public Information is the focal point for information policies of the United Nations and the primary news centre for information about the United Nations and its activities and those of the Secretary-General, and encourages a closer integration of functions between the Department and those offices providing spokesman services for the Secretary-General;

10. *Requests* the Secretary-General, in the context of the reorientation process, to continue to exert all efforts to ensure that publications and other information services of the Secretariat, including the United Nations web site and the United Nations News Service, contain comprehensive, objective and equitable information about the issues before the Organization and that they maintain editorial independence, impartiality, accuracy and full consistency with resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly;

11. *Notes* the submission by the Secretary-General of his report on the reorientation of United Nations activities in the field of public information and communications,[4] and welcomes the progress achieved since commencement of the reorientation exercise in enhancing the performance and effectiveness of the Department of Public Information in accordance with the mandates established by the General Assembly and the recommendations of the Committee on Information;

12. *Welcomes* the movement of the Department of Public Information towards a new "evaluation culture" of increased performance management, based

[3] Resolution 55/2.
[4] A/AC.198/2002/2.

on, inter alia, an annual programme impact review, as well as feedback from Member States, where appropriate;

13. *Welcomes* the intention of the Department of Public Information to further examine areas of duplication and fragmentation of functions in the structure of the Department as well as opportunities for greater coordination within the Secretariat as a whole and within the United Nations system in order to avoid overlapping of efforts in the implementation of its mandates and activities;

14. *Takes note* of the intention of the Secretary-General to conduct a comprehensive review of the management and operations of the Department of Public Information and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session in accordance with resolution 56/253, and recognizes that the comprehensive review of the Department is intended to facilitate the process of reorientation;

15. *Requests* the Committee on Information to examine thoroughly the comprehensive review once it has been finalized and to submit its recommendations thereon to the General Assembly, and stresses in this context the importance of respecting the principal competence of the Committee to undertake the examination and submit its recommendations prior to the consideration of the review by any other body;

16. *Calls upon* Member States to ensure, to the extent possible, that recommendations relating to the programme of work of the Department of Public Information originate and are considered in the Committee on Information;

17. *Notes* the proposed mission statement of the Department of Public Information,[5] and emphasizes the importance, when implementing the mandates established by the General Assembly, of direct outreach activities to Member States and the public and of the use of such intermediaries as the media, non-governmental organizations and educational institutions;

18. *Encourages* the Secretary-General, while maintaining the information programmes and activities mandated by the General Assembly until any alternative future decision has been taken on this matter upon the recommendation of the Committee on Information, to continue the study and consideration of certain organizational changes;

19. *Urges* the Department of Public Information to continue to exhibit, to the largest extent possible, transparency in order to increase awareness of the impact of its programmes and activities;

20. *Emphasizes* that, through its reorientation, the Department of Public Information should maintain and improve its activities in the areas of special interest to developing countries and, where appropriate, other countries with special needs, including countries in transition, and that such reorientation contributes to bridging the existing gap between the developing and the developed countries in the crucial field of public information and communications;

21. *Requests* the Department of Public Information to continue consultations with the Committee on Information prior to taking any decision on the possible changing of its title;

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[5] Ibid., para. 19.

22. *Encourages* the Secretary-General to strengthen the coordination between the Department of Public Information and other departments of the Secretariat, and underlines that public information capacities and activities in other departments should function under the guidance of the Department of Public Information;

23. *Welcomes* the initiatives that have been taken by the Department of Public Information to strengthen the public information system of the United Nations, and, in this regard, stresses the importance of a coherent and results-oriented approach being undertaken by the United Nations, the specialized agencies, the programmes and funds of the United Nations system involved in public information activities and the provision of resources for their implementation, and that this be done taking into account feedback from Member States on the relevance and effectiveness of its programme delivery;

24. *Welcomes* the report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the Joint United Nations Information Committee in 2001,[6] commends the Department of Public Information on its active and constructive participation in the Committee, particularly its efforts in promoting inter-agency coordination in the field of public information, encourages the Department to play a key role in the newly-established United Nations Communications Group, takes note of the efforts being undertaken by the Group to further develop several key initiatives, and requests the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at its consecutive sessions on the activities of the Group;

25. *Recognizes* the need for the Department of Public Information to increase its outreach activities in all regions, and reiterates the need to include, in the reorientation of United Nations activities in the field of public information and communications, an analysis of the present reach and scope of the Department's activities, identifying the widest possible spectrum of audiences and geographical areas which are not covered adequately and which may require special attention, including the appropriate means of communication, and bearing in mind local language requirements;

26. *Appreciates* the continued efforts of the Department of Public Information in issuing daily press releases, and requests the Department to continue providing this invaluable service to both Member States and representatives of the media, while considering possible means of improving their production process and streamlining their format, structure and length, keeping in mind the views of Member States and the fact that other departments may be providing similar or overlapping services in this regard;

III. Multilingualism and public information

27. *Emphasizes* the importance of ensuring the full, equitable treatment of all the official languages of the United Nations in all activities of the Department of Public Information, and stresses the importance of fully implementing its resolution 52/214 of 22 December 1997, in section C of which it requested the Secretary-General to ensure that the texts of all new public documents in all six official languages, and information materials of the United Nations, are made available through the United Nations web site daily and are accessible to Member States without delay;

[6] A/AC.198/2002/7.

28. *Reaffirms* its request to the Secretary-General to ensure that the Department of Public Information has appropriate staffing capacity in all official languages of the United Nations to undertake all its activities;

29. *Reminds* the Secretary-General of the need to include in future programme budget proposals for the Department of Public Information the importance of using all six official languages in its activities;

IV. Promotional campaigns

30. *Recognizes* that promotional campaigns aimed at supporting special sessions and international conferences of the United Nations are part of the core responsibility of the Department of Public Information, and welcomes the efforts of the Department to examine creative ways by which it can organize and implement these campaigns in partnership with the substantive departments concerned;

31. *Recognizes also* the need for enhanced publicity through a targeted strategy to be developed by the Department of Public Information on the forthcoming special sessions, international conferences and promotional campaigns of the United Nations pertaining to global issues using the United Nations Millennium Declaration as its guide;

32. *Supports* the efforts of the Department of Public Information, while ensuring respect for the priorities established by the General Assembly, to also focus its promotional campaigns on those major issues identified by the Secretary-General as referred to in paragraph 5 of the present resolution;

33. *Appreciates* the work of the Department of Public Information in promoting through its campaigns issues of importance to the international community, such as sustainable development, children, HIV/AIDS and decolonization, as well as the dialogue among civilizations, and the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster, and encourages the Department, in cooperation with the countries concerned and with the relevant organizations and bodies of the United Nations system, to continue to take appropriate measures to enhance world public awareness of these and other important global issues;

34. *Encourages* the Department of Public Information to continue to work within the United Nations Communications Group to coordinate implementation of communications strategies, with the heads of information of the agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system;

V. Bridging the digital divide

35. *Welcomes* the decision, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 56/183 of 21 December 2001, to convene the World Summit on the Information Society at Geneva in December 2003 and in Tunis in December 2005;

36. *Commends* the Secretary-General for the establishment of the United Nations Information Technology Service, the Health InterNetwork and the Information and Communications Technology Task Force with a view to bridging the digital divide and as a response to the continuing gulf between developed and developing countries, welcomes the contribution of the Department of Public Information in publicizing the efforts of the Secretary-General in closing the digital divide as a means of spurring economic growth and as a response to the continuing

gulf between developed and developing countries, and, in this context, requests the Department further to enhance its role;

VI. United Nations information centres

37. *Stresses* that the United Nations information centres and information components should continue to play a significant role in disseminating information about the work of the Organization to the peoples of the world, including in the areas outlined by the United Nations Millennium Declaration, and emphasizes that the United Nations information centres, as the "field voice" of the Department of Public Information, should promote public awareness and mobilize support for the work of the United Nations at the local level, bearing in mind that information in the local languages has the strongest impact on the local populations;

38. *Requests* the Secretary-General to include in his comprehensive review the results of the ongoing review by the Office of Internal Oversight Services of the Secretariat on this matter and information on the involvement of the Department of Public Information in the United Nations houses initiative;

39. *Takes note* of the efforts by some United Nations information centres to develop their own web pages in local languages, and encourages the Department of Public Information to provide resources and technical facilities, in particular to United Nations information centres whose web pages are not yet operational, to develop web pages in the respective local languages of their host countries, and encourages host Governments to respond to the needs of United Nations information centres;

40. *Welcomes* the efforts by the Department of Public Information to restore additional resources to those United Nations information centres that have suffered reductions in staffing and other resources as a result of budget reduction exercises undertaken in the past several years;

41. *Recalls* the appeal made by the Secretary-General to the host Governments of United Nations information centres to facilitate the work of the centres in their countries by providing rent-free or rent-subsidized premises, while taking into account the economic condition of the host Governments and bearing in mind that such support should not be a substitute for the full allocation of financial resources for the United Nations information centres in the context of the programme budget of the United Nations;

42. *Welcomes* the ongoing efforts of the Department of Public Information to review the allocation of both staff and financial resources to United Nations information centres with a view to possibly transferring resources from information centres in developed countries to developing countries;

43. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Integration of United Nations information centres with field offices of the United Nations Development Programme: continued implementation of the views of host Governments",[7] welcomes the consistent implementation by the Department of Public Information of the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly with respect to the integration of United Nations information centres with the field offices of the United Nations Development Programme; and reaffirms that any proposal in this

[7] A/AC.198/2002/4.

regard should be implemented only if feasible and on a case-by-case basis, while maintaining the operational and functional independence of United Nations information centres, taking into account the views of the host countries to ensure that the information functions and the autonomy of United Nations information centres are not adversely affected, to meet the policy's stated objective of improving the provision of information by the United Nations;

44. *Notes* the possibility of creating regional information centre "hubs", especially but not exclusively in areas where linguistic commonalities facilitate regionalization, stresses the need for the Committee on Information to consider a set of proposed guidelines and criteria relating to the advisability of implementing this option, and also stresses that the creation of any such "hubs", subject to the General Assembly endorsing these guidelines and criteria, should take place in a flexible manner, if feasible, on a case-by-case basis and only with the express approval of all host countries concerned;

VII. Role of the Department of Public Information in United Nations peacekeeping

45. *Takes note* with appreciation of the report of the Secretary-General on the role of the Department of Public Information in United Nations peacekeeping;[8]

46. *Commends* the efforts of the Secretary-General to strengthen the public information capacity of the Department of Public Information for the establishment and functioning of the information components of peacekeeping operations and of political and peace-building missions of the United Nations, including its promotional efforts and other information support activities, and requests the Secretariat to continue to ensure the involvement of the Department from the planning stage of such future operations through interdepartmental consultations and coordination with other departments of the Secretariat, in particular with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations;

47. *Requests* the Department of Public Information to continue its efforts to strengthen its capacity to contribute significantly to the functioning of information components in United Nations peacekeeping operations, including through the development of a coherent information strategy with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations;

48. *Stresses* the importance of enhancing the public information capacity of the Department of Public Information in the field of peacekeeping operations and its role in the selection process of spokespersons for United Nations peacekeeping operations or missions, and, in this regard, encourages the Department to second spokespersons who have the necessary skills to fulfil the tasks of the operations or missions, and to consider views expressed, especially by host countries, when appropriate, in this regard;

VIII. Dag Hammarskjöld Library

49. *Takes note* of the continuing efforts of the Secretary-General to make the Dag Hammarskjöld Library a virtual library with world outreach, making United Nations information and other acquired materials accessible electronically to a

[8] A/AC.198/2002/5.

growing number of readers and users, and takes note also of the efforts of the Secretary-General to enrich on a multilingual basis the stock of books and journals in the Library, including publications on peace and security and development-related issues, to ensure that the Library continues to be a broadly accessible resource for information about the United Nations and its activities;

50. *Requests* the Secretary-General to include in his comprehensive review the results of the overall review of the United Nations system library services, including the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, the libraries in the United Nations Offices at Geneva and Vienna, the libraries in the regional commissions, departmental libraries, libraries at information centres and depository libraries called for by the General Assembly in resolution 56/253 of 24 December 2001;

51. *Takes note* of the training courses conducted by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library for the representatives of Member States and Secretariat staff on Cyberseek, web search, the Intranet, United Nations documentation, UN-I-QUE and the Official Document System of the United Nations;

IX. Traditional means of communication: radio, television and publications

52. *Stresses* that radio remains one of the most cost-effective and far-reaching traditional media available to the Department of Public Information and an important instrument in United Nations activities, such as development and peacekeeping;

53. *Recalls* paragraph 47 of its resolution 56/64 B, in which it decided, building upon the success of the pilot project on the development of an international radio broadcasting capacity for the United Nations as well as the scope of its programme distribution and established partnerships, to expand the international radio broadcasting capacity of the United Nations in all six official languages;

54. *Appreciates* that the Department of Public Information, as stated in paragraph 32 of the report on the reorientation of United Nations activities in the field of public information and communication,[4] has managed to establish partnerships with over 265 radio stations to carry its broadcasts with a potential to reach as many as 180 million listeners worldwide;

55. *Looks forward* to the report of the Secretary-General to be submitted to the Committee on Information at its twenty-fifth session on the implementation of the United Nations international radio broadcasting capacity, including information that can be obtained from the local, national and regional radio partners about the estimated number of listeners reached and the cost-effectiveness of radio as an instrument in United Nations activities, in order for the Committee to decide on the future of this capacity;

56. *Takes note* of the efforts under way by the Department of Public Information to disseminate programmes directly to broadcasting stations all over the world in the six official languages as well as in other languages, and, in that regard, stresses the need for impartiality and objectivity concerning information activities of the United Nations;

57. *Emphasizes* that United Nations Radio and Television should take full advantage of the technological infrastructure made available in recent years (satellite platforms, information and communications technologies, the Internet,

etc.) and requests the Secretary-General, as a part of the reorientation of the Department of Public Information, to consider a global strategy for broadcasting, taking into account existing technologies;

58. *Takes note* of the importance of the continued implementation by the Department of Public Information of the ongoing programme for broadcasters and journalists from developing countries and countries in transition as mandated by the General Assembly, and encourages the Department to consider how best to maximize the benefits derived from the programme by reviewing, inter alia, its duration and the number of its participants;

59. *Reiterates* that all publications of the Department of Public Information, in accordance with existing mandates, should fulfil an identifiable need, should not duplicate other publications of the United Nations system and should be produced in a cost-effective manner, and, in this regard, requests the Secretary-General to include in his comprehensive review the relevant results of the larger review of United Nations publications and information materials called for by the General Assembly in resolution 56/253;

X. United Nations web site

60. *Notes* the report of the Secretary-General on the continued development, maintenance and enrichment of the United Nations web site in the six official languages,[9] and takes note of the possible courses of action outlined therein;

61. *Reiterates* its appreciation for the efforts of the Department of Public Information in creating a high-quality, user-friendly and cost-effective web site, noting that this is especially noteworthy, considering the scope of this undertaking, the budget constraints within the United Nations and the remarkably rapid expansion of the World Wide Web, reaffirms that the web site remains a very useful tool for media, non-governmental organizations, educational institutions, Member States, and the general public, and welcomes the creation of the United Nations web site on terrorism;

62. *Takes note* with concern that the multilingual development and enrichment of the United Nations web site has been slower than expected because of a lack of resources, among other factors;

63. *Notes* that content-providing offices have not, in general, been making their materials on the United Nations web site available in all six official languages;

64. *Stresses* the need for adopting a decision on the multilingual development, maintenance and enrichment of the United Nations web site, considering, inter alia, the possibility of organizational restructuring towards separate language units of each of the six official languages within the Department of Public Information in order to achieve full parity among the official languages of the United Nations;

65. *Reaffirms* its request to the Secretary-General to ensure, until such a decision has been taken and implemented, to the extent possible and while maintaining an up-to-date and accurate web site, the equitable distribution of equal distribution of financial and human resources within the Department of Public

[9] A/AC.198/2002/6.

Information allocated to the United Nations web site among all official languages on a continuous basis, and to make every possible effort to ensure that all materials contained on the web site that do not change and do not need regular maintenance are made available in all six official languages;

66. *Reaffirms* also the need of achieving full parity among the six official languages on the United Nations web site, and in this regard, takes note of the concept of the proposal of the Secretary-General, as contained in paragraph 33 of his report,[9] to translate all English materials and databases on the United Nations web site by the respective content-providing offices of the Secretariat into all official languages, and requests the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at its twenty-fifth session on the most practical, efficient and cost-effective means of implementing this proposal;

67. *Requests* the Secretary-General to include in his report to the Committee on Information at its twenty-fifth session proposals relating to the designation of a future date by which all supporting arrangements would be in place for the implementation of this concept and after which parity will continue from that date onwards as well as to the exemption of specific items from translation on the web site;

68. *Stresses* the importance of access to United Nations Treaty Collection and United Nations parliamentary documentation for the public;

69. *Encourages* the Secretary-General, through the Department of Public Information, to continue to take full advantage of recent developments in information technology, including the Internet, in order to improve, in a cost-effective manner, the expeditious dissemination of information on the United Nations, in accordance with the priorities established by the General Assembly and taking into account the linguistic diversity of the Organization;

70. *Takes note* that the High-Level Committee on Management of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination has requested its Technical Adviser to prepare a preliminary study on the issue of one central Internet portal for the United Nations system to be submitted to the High-Level Committee on Management at its meeting in September, and requests the Department of Public Information, as the manager of the Organization's web site, to convey the considerations of the Committee on Information on this matter and to report thereon to the Committee on Information at its twenty-fifth session;

71. *Takes note* of the reports of the Secretary-General on re-engineering of the Optical Disk System (now called the Official Document System of the United Nations[10] and on simultaneous availability of parliamentary documentation in electronic form in the six official languages on the United Nations web site;[11]

72. *Commends* the efforts of the Information Technology Services Division of the Office of Central Support Services of the Secretariat in ensuring that the required technological infrastructure is in place to accommodate the imminent linkage of the Official Document System to the United Nations web site and also commends the Department of Public Information for addressing issues of content management relating to the System;

[10] A/56/120/Rev.1.
[11] A/C.5/56/12.

73. *Also takes note* of the fact that the integration of the Official Document System with the United Nations web site will significantly enhance the multilingual nature of the United Nations web site and will lead to efficiencies throughout all Secretariat departments through the elimination of duplicate formatting and posting of documents;

74. *Requests* the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at its twenty-fifth session on the impact on the functioning of the Official Document System following implementation of the full multilingual support function and on the feasibility of providing free, public access to the System through a linkage with the United Nations web site, including options with a view to revising the current subscription policy established in General Assembly resolution 51/211 F of 15 September 1997, and expresses its intention to take a decision on the subscription policy during the main part of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly;

75. *Takes note* with interest of the electronic mail-based United Nations News Service distributed worldwide by e-mail by the Department of Public Information, and appreciates the plan of the Department to provide this service in the other four official languages in 2002 and emphasizes that extra care needs to be taken to ensure that news-breaking stories and news alerts are accurate, impartial and free of any bias;

XI. Final remarks

76. *Requests* the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at its twenty-fifth session and to the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session on the activities of the Department of Public Information and on the implementation of the recommendations contained in the present resolution;

77. *Requests* the Committee on Information to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session;

78. *Decides* to include in the provisional agenda of its fifty-eighth session the item entitled "Questions relating to information".